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SUBJECT: STILL A CHANCE TO NEGOTIATE ON PEACEKEEPING IN
DARFUR, SAYS MAGZOUB AL-KHALIFA

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CAMERON HUME; REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: There is still a chance for negotiations with the UN on peacekeeping in Darfur, Presidential Advisor Magzoub al-Khalifa told CDA Hume on July 3, though the objective should be peace, not the deployment of UN peacekeepers. Conditions on the ground had improved since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), but implementation should not be rushed, he advised. The Government was working to create a partnership with Minni Minawi and other DPA supporters, and was making efforts to bring Abdulwahid Nur into the peace process. But the UN Security Council had not handled peacekeeping talks in a "proper manner." The best option now was an "AU plus" force, with the UN providing logistical, financial, and other administrative help, Magzoub suggested. Hume countered that the AU's deficiencies were more fundamental, and that this peacekeeping issue was bound to have a strong impact on Sudan's relations with the United States. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Conditions across North and South Darfur had improved since the signing of the DPA, Magzoub told Hume. All rebel commanders in South Darfur, including those from the SLA (Abdulwahid) and the JEM, supported the agreement, and many of the tribal chiefs in West Darfur had joined, too. But the Chad-Sudan border was still a problem, especially in West Darfur. In North Darfur, Chadian militiamen continued to attack Minawi's forces, though some Zagahwa fighters had defected to join Minawi. The situation in the IDP camps had also calmed down. Only three out of the eleven major camps, including Kalma and Abu Shouk, still faced problems. Magzoub cautioned about implementing the agreement too fast, noting that the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs was still not ready for IDPs to return home. "There needs to be water, protection, and basic services in place," he said, predicting that no movements would begin before the end of September.

¶3. (C) The Government was reaching out to the rebels, including those who had not signed the DPA. "I speak to Minni Minawi every other day," Magzoub said. The Government is working with Minawi to bring his group into the Government, and Magzoub expects Minawi to come to Khartoum within the next three or four days. Minawi may soon be named Assistant to the President, Magzoub hinted. In addition, Magzoub had recently met with leaders of other SLA and JEM groups who supported the DPA, in an effort to bring them into the Government of National Unity (GNU).

¶4. (C) A group of Fur tribal leaders had even approached Magzoub several days ago to ask him to support their visit to Asmara, to visit Abdulwahid Nur. "They said Abdulwahid just needed an explanation of what was in the DPA for him," he

recounted, repeating his offer of a national fund to provide food and supplies for Darfur IDPs. But Magzoub suspected Abdulwahid's real interest was not money, but power. "Abdulwahid told Minni that if Minni let him become the Assistant to the President, he'd sign the agreement," Magzoub reported. Magzoub had also met recently with Abdulrahman Dousa -- leader of the "Group of 19" that left Abdulwahid's faction to support the DPA. (In a separate meeting with the Charge, Dousa confided that Magzoub had asked what positions the SLA might want within the GNU. Dousa told Hume he plans to hold a conference in Nyala to discuss the future of the SLA).

15. (C) Hume outlined U.S. efforts to support Minawi, and added that the United States was also supporting Fur efforts to bring Abdulwahid into the peace process. But there should be no changes to the text of the DPA, Hume emphasized, much to Magzoub's agreement. The key issue now was not internal, but external. Sudan had asked the United States to help it reach an agreement with the rebels because the AU could not deliver. But the AU could not deliver on implementation, either. The UN Security Council was currently writing a draft resolution for peacekeeping in Darfur and the United States had provided a moderate draft.

16. (C) Magzoub replied that Sudan appreciated the United States' help, including the efforts of the Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretary Frazer. However, the UN Security Council had not handled the peacekeeping issue in a "proper manner." The UNSC had passed a resolution on May 15, and then rushed to begin negotiations with the Government. Instead, they should have had negotiations with the Government first "in a calm manner," and then made a decision. The issue now was to strengthen the current AU mission, "with the support of the UN." Even the SPLM's

KHARTOUM 00001562 002 OF 002

support for a UN deployment did not carry weight with stakeholders in the North. Magzoub admitted that the AU's problems were not limited to logistics -- they also needed help with administration and finances -- but rejected any move that undermined Sudan's sovereignty, or created the impression that Africa was still a "colony." There was still a chance for political negotiations between Sudan and the UN, but the objective should be peace, not the deployment of UN peacekeepers. "We need the AU plus the UN," he emphasized.

17. (C) Hume countered that the AU's problems were not only logistical or administrative, and warned that donors might not support the AU without a transition to the UN. Moreover, Hume pointed out, many people in Darfur simply did not trust the AU. Magzoub replied that the UN also had many problems, and that simply changing the color of the AU's hats from green to blue would not solve the AU's problems. Still, Magzoub believed that if the UN and Sudan continued a "political dialogue," they could reach an agreement. The conflict between Chad and Sudan should also be included in any discussions with the UN, Magzoub added, noting that this issue "should be left to the AU or Tripoli."

18. (C) The next two to three weeks would be difficult for the bilateral relationship, Hume predicted. Annan would soon report to the UNSC and the Donors Consortium would meet on July 18 in Brussels. Peacekeeping in Darfur was now a major issue in the broader relationship. Magzoub noted that improving relations with the United States was in Sudan's national -- and cultural -- interests. He said Sudan should use instruments like the DPA and the CPA to send a positive message. More dialogue was needed to address differences over such issues as any UN role in Darfur.

19. (C) COMMENT: Magzoub held to Bashir's line that the AU, not the UN, had to be in charge of peacekeeping, but he acknowledged serious AU capacity problems. MFA Under-secretary Mutriff Saddiq has said the same. Both suggest, however, that it will be up to someone else to break

the impasse. END COMMENT.
HUME